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- Cities and Fragile States -

CIVIL SOCIETY IN CONFLICT CITIES: THE CASE OF AHMEDABAD

Neera Chandhoke
University of Delhi

November 2009

Crisis States Working Papers Series No.2

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Civil Society in Conflict Cities: The Case of Ahmedabad[1]

Neera Chandhoke
University of Delhi

Introduction

In 2002, mobs belonging to the cadres of the Hindu religious right (the *Sangh Parivar*)[2] and a motley collection of followers executed what is best described as a 'near pogrom' of the Muslim inhabitants of Ahmedabad, where – although almost all the districts of Gujarat were affected by communal violence – aggression against Muslims took on particularly savage forms. This paper asks what accounts for the failure of civil society in Ahmedabad to raise a collective voice of protest against immoderate and deliberate acts of violence, both by state officials and its own organisations.

Violence is not a stranger to Ahmedabad. The city is known for the frequency, the scale and the intensity of communal riots between Hindus and Muslims, even when the rest of the country and the state of Gujarat have not witnessed such violence. The first communal riot occurred in 1941, and another took place on the eve of the partition of the country.[3] In 1969, in the first major communal riot to take place in the post independence period, 1,500 people (90 percent of all those killed) belonged to the Muslim community, and property worth 40 million rupees was destroyed (Shah 1970). While minor riots occurred in 1971, 1972, 1973, 1977, 1980, 1981 and 1982, the next major riot took place in 1985, followed by further minor riots in 1986, 1987 and 1989. Major riots then occurred in 1990, 1993, 1999 and 2000 (see

[1] The paper is based on fieldwork carried out in Ahmedabad in 2006 and 2007 by Praveen Priyadarshi, Silky Tyagi and Neha Khanna to whom I owe a great debt. I wish to thank James Putzel, Jo Beall and Wendy Foulds of the Crisis States Research Centre for their support. We are grateful to the following organisations and individuals who helped us in our research. Hirenbhai Gandhi and Wilfred D'Costa (INSAAF), Oxfam, Darshini Mahadevia (University), Ghanshyam Shah, (Social Scientist) Ila Ben Pathak (AWAG), Rajendra Joshi (SAATH), Gazala (SAMARTH), Kusum Girish Patel (Lawyer),Yasmeen Rehmani (SAATH)-Zakia- (Action Aid), Meera and Rafeeq- (C.F.D. and HUM-Hindu United Muslim Sangathan), Achut Yagnik (SETU), Purushottam, (Ekta Yuvak Mandal, Berahmpura), Nafeesa (UTHAN), Zayed (Himmat in Vatva), members of Pratham (Education for children), Haneef Lakdawala (SANCHETNA), Father Cedric Prakash (Justice for Peace), Abida Ben (Sakhi Mahila Mandal in Saraspur), members of Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association or Majoor Mahajan, Manohar Shukla (Secretary of ATLA), Prof. B.B. Patel (Gandhi Labour Institute), Mujib Ahmad Awami (Gujarati Sarvajanik Welfare Trust), Sallubhai (Gomatipur), Mr. Rawal (Joint Managing Director, Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation), Girish Patel (TLA), Sarahben (AWAG), Hiren Bhai, Noorjehan (Action Aid), faculty of IIM, office of ATIRA Ahmedabad Textile Industries Research Association, SVIIPA, GLI- Gandhi Labour Institute, SPISER- Sardar Patel Institute of Social and Economic Research, libraries of SETU, ATMA,GCC, Shabnam Hashmi, Apporvananda, Vijay Jani (ANHAD), Rashidaben, Local activist, Shehnaz and Hozefa, Aman Samudaya- families of Ekta Nagar, Faizal Park and Baghe Aman. The mistakes and the flaws in the paper remain mine.

[2] The core of the *Sangh Parivar*, or the extended family of groups that are related to each other by their commitment to the doctrine of Hindu supremacy, is the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS). This is a highly motivated, disciplined and ideologically charged formation. The parliamentary wing of the religious right was first known as the Jan Sangh and then in 1980 as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Since the mid 1990s, the BJP has been in power in the state government. The two other organisations that act as storm troopers for the religious right are the Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). Other groups that subscribe to the doctrine of extreme religious nationalism come and go, but all such organisations find room beneath the umbrella of the *Sangh Parivar*.

[3] Communal riots occur when members of two communities employ violence against each other, resulting in deaths, physical harm, destruction of property and devastation of livelihoods. In India, the category of communal violence is normally used to refer to violence among religious communities, most notably between Hindus and Muslims.

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Figure 1 and Annex 1). The immediate provocation for these riots ranged from harassment of women, India-Pakistan cricket matches, kite-flying incidents, religious festivals and processions, and alleged desecration of holy books, to reservations for lower castes in the government and in educational institutions. Caste riots have been transformed into communal riots in a shockingly short span of time (Spodek 1989). The time scale of the riots has varied from one week (1969) to one year (2000). Not only has the role of the police been ineffective, but according to reports by government enquiry commissions and citizen tribunals the police have actively participated in the infliction of violence upon the minorities. The army has had to be called in repeatedly, but often is not allowed to function effectively.

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The 2002 case of communal violence is distinctive from earlier occasions in at least three respects. Firstly, the employment of violence was completely one-sided. The immediate provocation for the violence was what has come to be known as the 'Godhra incident'. On 27 February 2002, the Sabarmati Express left Godhra station, but was halted within one kilometre, when someone pulled the chain, in front of Signal Falia, a Muslim-dominated locality. A mob consisting of Muslims gathered and began to pelt the train with stones, and set one of the coaches on fire, burning fifty-eight passengers, including women and children, to death. This act appeared to be a response to the extremely offensive language and actions of some of the passengers belonging to the cadres of the religious right, who had harassed Muslim passengers on the train. At Godhra station these people had attacked a tea vendor and attempted to molest a Muslim woman. Although the police arrested 62 Muslims under the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance, the Hindu right immediately capitalised upon the tragedy to whip up communal passions. Mobs led by members of the *Sangh Parivar* thereon proceeded to administer brutal vigilante justice. Crowds assembled, inflammatory pamphlets were circulated and the Gujarati print media intensified crowd rage by publishing unverified reports that Hindu women had been raped by Muslim mobs at Godhra. Thus began the cycle of barbaric violence in which Muslim neighbourhoods, shops, restaurants and business establishments were burnt, women were gang raped and murdered in particularly gruesome ways, little children were massacred and hundreds of Muslims were killed. In Ahmedabad alone, 700 Muslims lost their lives, and almost 7,000 were rendered homeless. It has been estimated that about 2,000 Muslims lost their lives in the entire state. The carefully executed and precisely designed pogrom was meticulously planned and orchestrated by the *Bajrang Dal*, the VHP and the RSS. The selective targeting of Muslims, the arson, the rapes and the murders were carried out with the kind of exactitude that presumes foreknowledge and advance planning. Mobs were armed with lists of Muslim-owned establishments such as shops, restaurants and businesses, even if the owners had given a Hindu name to their business enterprises. The report of the civil liberties organisation, the Peoples Union for Democratic Rights (2002), pointed out that the chilling monotony of killing, burning, arson, raping, maiming and looting was accompanied by shouts of 'kill, hack and burn'. The scale and the intensity of the violence surpassed that of previous years mainly because this time the search and destroy operations were not spontaneous (Breman 2004: 288-9).

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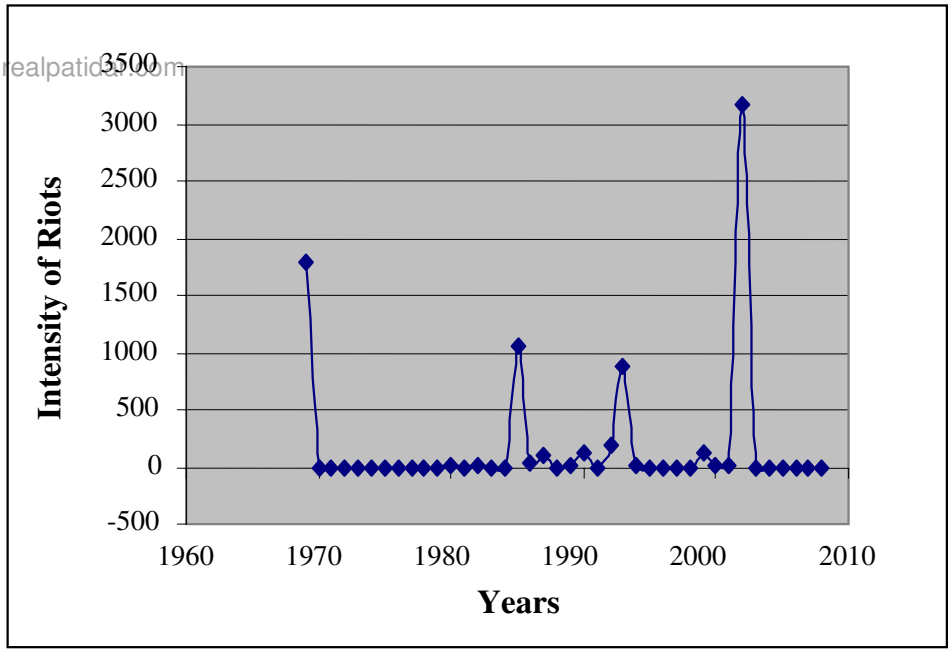

Figure 1: Communal Violence in Ahmedabad[4]
Source: Reports of inquiry commissions, investigations by concerned citizen groups and civil liberty organisations, and newspaper reports.

The second distinctive feature of the 2002 violence is that politicians belonging to the BJP (which was in power in the state government), bureaucrats and the police were actively complicit in these acts. Though the role of the holders of state power in this incident is still being investigated by the Special Investigation Commission set up by the central government, what is clear is that the state government made absolutely no attempt to protect innocent citizens. The Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, explained away post-Godhra violence in terms of the Newtonian law of physics, as a natural reaction to an (incendiary) action. In sum, the government refrained from either preventing Hindu mobs from implementing their macabre designs, or from protecting Muslim citizens. On the contrary, according to all reliable reports the government gave the cadres of its own party and allied organisations a free hand when they set about exterminating members of the minority community. For instance, when the Congress Member of Parliament, Ehsan Jaffri, requested police protection against a huge mob that had gathered outside the building in which he lived, his pleas met with no response. He, his family and other Muslims who had gathered there for protection were dragged out by the mob and killed, despite the fact that these families lived in an upper-middle class neighbourhood. The report by an independent fact-finding mission stated that the police commissioner in Ahmedabad commanded a total of 10,000 men, including 3,000 armed men and 16 companies of the State Reserve Police, yet mobs of about

[4] The chart is prepared for illustrative purposes and not for any substantive analytical objective. For the measurement of intensity of a conflict, two indicators (number of people killed and number of people injured) have been taken. Certain other important indicators, such as time span of rioting and destruction of property, have not been taken into account because no reliable data is available for comparison purposes. To measure the intensity of a riot, each killing in a riot has been given a value of 3 and an injury a value of 1.

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5,000 could run amok, loot, rape, beat and murder. The police stood by when it did not actively abet the mobs (Chenoy et al. 2002: 15). A Human Rights Watch report stated that attacks took place in the vicinity of police stations and posts, with the police often firing on Muslims. The army was called in only after thirty-six hours, but troops were not deployed until the violence had caused hundreds of victims (Human Rights Watch 2002).

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Thirdly, whereas earlier riots had more or less taken place in old Ahmedabad, particularly the walled city and the industrial areas, this time the entire city was affected. Notably, middle-class families and upper-caste and class women took an active part in the looting of designer shops and jewellery stores. The report of Human Rights Watch (2002) observed that the 'under-class was supported in the looting by the middle-and upper-middle classes, including women. They not only indulged in pillaging but openly celebrated the destruction and the mounting death toll.'

More disturbingly, for the most part civil society organisations in Ahmedabad either kept silent or participated in the violence. Breman (2004: 292) suggests that but for 'a few exceptions, the institutions that represent civil society took no action at all when this horrific violence broke out'. T. K. Oommen (2008: 74-5), writing on reconciliation attempts in the aftermath of the 2002 pogrom in Gujarat, arrives at the same conclusion. Although a number of civil society organisations are active in the city, it continued to be wracked by violence for more than two months. What is more troublesome, writes Oomen, is that a section of civil society organisations, mainly the militant Hindu ones (the RSS, the VHP, and the *Bajrang Dal*) actively participated in the violence against the Muslims. Though some civil society organisation began to mobilise legal, psychological and material aid to the victims in the relief camp, on the whole organisations did not protest against the violence, or against the failure of the government to protect its own citizens. Some radical groups in Ahmedabad told our research team that it was difficult to get civil society organisations onto the street to demonstrate against the pogrom, and against state failure to rehabilitate the victims and give them justice, even on the sixth and seventh anniversary of the Godhra and post-Godhra violence.

It cannot be said that no civil society exists in Ahmedabad, because since the turn of the twentieth century a number of social organisations in the city have initiated programmes of social reform and social welfare, a trade union movement has worked for the interest of the industrial work force and housing associations have established residential communities. During the struggle against colonialism, against P.M. Indira Gandhi's authoritarian regime and against the internal emergency imposed by her government (between 1975 and 1977) the city witnessed frenetic political activity in defence of civil and political rights. Yet organisations in Ahmedabad's civil society can also be held responsible for violent acts against the lower castes, and against the religious minority in particular, and for the creation of a segmented and divided city in general. That some civil society organisations have practiced the politics of discrimination and hate is not surprising, because civil society as a plural space also contains collectives that possess a will for violence. What is surprising is that democratic organisations in Ahmedabad have not battled such practices, and thus constituted civil society as a contested and democratic space.

There are two ways in which we can begin to understand this phenomenon. One, the history of civil society organisations in the city is the history of philanthropy and voluntary sector involvement in social work and reform. In the first few years of the twentieth century, industrialists in the city had set up the *Swadeshi Mitra Mandal*, an organisation that had tried

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to raise awareness among the workforce through adult education. Social reform, particularly in the field of hygiene, health care, adult education and schooling for the children of the working class, was initiated by Anusuyaben Sarabhai, the sister of the one of the biggest textile magnates in the city. She helped establish the 'Friends of Labourers Society' in 1916, which set up credit facilities for the workers. Though these and other organisations have contributed to the amelioration of poverty and to development, they have tended to stay away from either politically mobilising the people, or confronting the government (Majumdar 1973: 76-7). The labour union that was established by Gandhi carried on this tradition of social work and social reform. The Textile Labour Association, which was based on notions of partnership with capital, failed to establish a radical working-class culture in the city. It certainly failed, as will be discussed below, to replace a conservative social ethos based on caste and religious affiliations, with an ethos of working-class solidarity. Significantly, neither Ahmedabad, nor indeed Gujarat, has seen an anti-caste movement that could overturn caste hierarchy, challenge conservatism and pave the way for the consolidation of an egalitarian spirit in the city and in the state.[5]

Still there is no reason to suppose that the most conservative of societies are immune or insensitive to the spectacle of violence, bloodshed and mayhem that has been ritually played out in Ahmedabad's neighbourhoods and work places, or that they are ready to participate in them. Social and even cultural conservatism is not synonymous with blood lust. Groups may not interact with each other in the social domain, but this does not mean that they set about systematically exterminating each other in the most brutal of ways possible. There is, after all, a major difference between the consolidation of hard communal prejudices in a society, and outbursts of inhuman communal violence. Communal prejudice may be an essential precondition for violence, but it is not enough. The translation of communal sentiments into violence demands a trigger; and the construction of the trigger involves, as will be discussed below, an entire host of distinct processes. Therefore, the explanation that since civil society organisations in Ahmedabad are more tuned to social reform instead of democratic politics, they did not protest against the employment of violence, is simply not persuasive.

The second explanation is infinitely more disturbing. Is it possible that civil society in Ahmedabad has failed to protest against major transgressions of basic human rights because it has become accustomed to violence? If civil society does not erupt in protest against the deliberate infringement of every basic human right, something must have gone wrong in the constitution of this sphere. Is perchance civil society familiar with violence? Is indifference to violence, or even participation in violent acts, a constitutive aspect of civil society?

The irony is that Ahmedabad was the site of Gandhi's experiments in truth and non-violence. But these lessons, it appears, were half-heartedly internalised in the collective psyche. In 1919, reports of Gandhiji's detention by the colonial government swept the city, and mob violence led to the jail, the telegraph office and the Collectors' office being set on fire. The Gandhian lesson of non-violence, it seemed, was soon forgotten. But at the same time Gandhians walked the streets to counsel patience and reassure the workers. Regrettably no Gandhian has walked the streets during the frightening communal riots that have become a recurrent feature of the city. In 2002, when Muslims fleeing murderous mobs tried to seek refuge in the Sabarmati Ashram, which had been established by Gandhi as a project in inter-caste and inter-communal harmony, the ashram closed its doors ostensibly in order to protect its property. The substantial Jain community in the city is wedded to the doctrine of non-

[5] I am indebted to Ghanshyam Shah for this insight into Ahmedabad

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violence; but this tradition has not found root in civil society. The community has kept silent in the face of tremendous brutality wreaked against the Muslim community. Numerous holy men who head a number of religious orders, each of which preaches the imperative of coming to peace with the world and with oneself, also kept quiet; and if some civil society organisations kept mute in the face of massive transgression of basic civil rights, and the complicity of state officials and the police in the violence unleashed on Muslims, others, particularly organisations belonging to the Hindu right wing, were actively involved in the violence. A natural consequence is that groups that are dedicated to democracy and to battling fascist groups are rendered helpless.

Civil society in Ahmedabad, it is painfully clear, has failed to bring people together in shared projects. The question is why? Ashutosh Varshney (2002: 277-8) has argued that in Ahmedabad the post-independence decline of integrated associations was not a consequence of communal riots, but that communal riots were a consequence of a prior decline of organisations that bound Hindus and Muslims together in large numbers. He identifies the Congress Party and the Textile Labour Association as two civil society organisations that managed to integrate the two communities, till the point that these organisations began to decline and degenerate. Our research has shown on the contrary that the reach of the Congress in Ahmedabad was limited, that a majority of the Muslims ceased to partner the Congress in political agitations after the 1920s, and that the Textile Labour Association was itself organised on the basis of caste and religious units. It was therefore unable to transcend either segmented identities, or provide a radical working-class identity that could subsume particularistic identities often poised against each other. In Ahmedabad, the very preconditions for engagement in the spaces of civil society were markedly absent. Hindus and Muslims have lived in segmented spaces since the inception of the city, and violence between the two communities has been an ongoing phenomenon up to the present day – and since the mid-1980s, the cadres of the *Sangh Parivar* have acted as a catalytic agent for this, armed as they were with a mission to unite the Hindus by focussing on an external enemy. When the BJP came to power in the state, the communal agenda of the cadres of the right acquired both legitimacy and political power. In the face of this highly organised and targeted onslaught, the members of the Muslim community were rendered helpless, civil society was immobilised and many of its own organisations participated actively in the violence.

This paper argues that civil society in Ahmedabad has been rendered helpless because certain preconditions for a democratic and vibrant civil society have been weakly articulated and inadequately institutionalised in the city. These preconditions are as follows. One, the consequences of exclusionary identity-producing and reproducing processes should have been mediated through other processes and transactions outside the metaphorical boundaries of civil society. Two, the state should possess rigorous control over the means and deployment of violence. And three one ethnic identity should not become a state-making project, or take over the state. The paper also suggests that the potential of civil society organisations to battle undemocratic organisations, as well as an undemocratic state, is severely truncated when: (a) members are irrevocably divided outside the boundaries of civil society; (b) one ethnic group takes on a state-making project; (c) the state in the service of this ethnic group deploys power against the minorities; and (d) the state does not penalise groups that employ violence against innocent people.

The paper is divided into four parts: in the first, the city of Ahmedabad is briefly profiled and its history of residential segregation are detailed; the second deals with political movements; the third section details the textile industry and the politics of trade unionism; and the fourth

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details the rise of the Hindu right. The concluding section brings together the argument in the various sections to generate some propositions on the failure of civil society in Ahmedabad.

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Ahmedabad and Residential Segregation

The city of Ahmedabad, which lies on the banks of the Sabarmati River in Western India, is located in one of the most urbanised and industrialised parts of the state of Gujarat, of which it is one of the largest cities, and the seventh largest urban agglomeration in the country. The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, set up by the central government in December 2005, declared Ahmedabad to be one of India's eight mega cities, and announced a new development programme for the city. On 14 February 2006, the Gujarat state government extended the city boundary, merging in the process seven peripheral municipalities into the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC). The city area has now increased from 198 to 500 square kilometres, and the 2001 census showed that the population of the AMC was 3.52 million. The Muslim community constitutes 15 percent of the population, slightly more than the all-India figure of about 13 percent. The demographic strength of the Muslim population has as a matter of course declined since the partition of India. The special report on the city in the 1961 census calculated that the Hindus, who accounted for 69.67 percent of the total population of the city in 1901, had gradually risen to 76.94 percent; while the Muslim population fell from 20.53 percent to 15.51 percent during the same period, probably due to migration to Pakistan in 1947 (Government of India 1962: 203).

Ahmedabad is geographically divided into eastern and the western parts by the river; and the two parts are connected by five bridges. The city consists of four distinct regions: the old city; the industrial belt; the relatively new western districts; and the suburban region that falls outside the boundaries of the AMC, but within the Urban Development Authority. The industrial belt is located in the eastern periphery, and is dominated by one-room housing units (*chawls*), which originally housed mill workers, and slums. Mahadevia (2002: 4851) estimates that though this part contains about 44 percent of the housing units in the AMC, it also contains 75 percent of *chawl* units and 47 percent of slum units. Workers in the largely informal economy live in these degraded housing clusters, very often built on illegally occupied land. The worst excesses of the 2002 pogrom occurred in these areas, particularly in Naroda Patiya, where almost a hundred Muslims lost their lives. The spatial organisation of the western part is radically different to that of the eastern: less congested, more affluent, more spacious and certainly better serviced than the old city. Western Ahmedabad is a predominantly upper-class area, yet 22 percent of its population still lives in slums. Of the total housing units of this area, 28 percent are slum areas (Mahadevia 2002: 4851).

According to the 2001 census, literacy levels in the city are 73.3 percent: about ten percent higher than the Indian aggregate. The state of Gujarat tops the country in terms of per capita income, and is one of the richest states in India mainly because it has been able to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by globalisation. This is the particular case with Ahmedabad. In the wake of the collapse of the textile industry in the mid-1980s, which led to the closure of 50 out of 72 mills, the city has diversified its industrial base, and made inroads into the financial and services sectors. Chemical and petrochemical industries have replaced textiles as the largest component in manufacturing, and these sectors account for 29 percent of total manufacturing. The city has attracted foreign direct investment in various sectors, mainly in infrastructure and real estate development. A River Front Development Plan, worth approximately 12,000 million rupees, is already under way. The objective of this plan is to develop a central business district on both sides of the river Sabarmati (Mahadevia and Brar 2006: 1). The spatial effects of globalisation are also more than evident. What used to be

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working-class tenements have been converted into malls, restaurants and cinemas; and the old disused textile mills have been converted into office blocks.

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Historically, Ahmedabad has been an important centre of trade The city was founded in 1411 by the Gujarat Sultan, Ahmad Shah (after whom the city has been named), at the intersection of caravan routes to Rajasthan, Delhi, Malwa, Sind with its port of Tatta (Lahari Bandar) and to the ports of Cambay, Surat and Broach (Gillion 1969: 14). It controlled key trade routes with the North, East, West and South of the country, and is situated in the midst of a cotton-growing belt. These two factors motivated Sultan Ahmad Shah of the Gujarat Sultanate to establish a city close to where an earlier trading centre namely Asaval or Karnavati stood (Chaudhri 2001: 679; Yagnik and Sheth 2005: 9).[6] The city, which was built on the banks of the Sabarmati river; fifty miles from the mouth of the river, and 173 feet above mean sea level, replaced both Karnavati and Patan, the old capital, as the most important city of the Gujarat region. The old walled city covered an area of two square miles, and the walls were completed in 1487. Among the first few settlements in the city were the Badra Fort, Amir Settlements (around the area of the city which is now known as Gandhi Road) Shahi Maidan, Teen Darwaza and the Jumma Masjid that was built in the 15th century. The second wall, which had ten gates, was constructed by the Mughals. After 1532, settlements began to proliferate within the walled area. Subsequently, the city expanded spatially to include Puras (suburbs) outside the walled city. Ahmed Shah encouraged merchants, weavers and skilled craftsmen to settle in Ahmedabad, so that the city could develop as a flourishing weaving and trading centre.

A hundred years of growth was followed by sixty years of decay as the Gujarat Sultanate declined, and trade passed into the hands of the Portuguese. Ahmedabad recovered some if its reputation and prosperity in 1572 after it became a part of the Mughal Empire, and more importantly the seat of the Mughal Viceroy of Gujarat. During the period of Mughal rule, whereas the court officials and skilled weavers were Muslim, the financiers and traders were generally Hindus and Jain. The only exception to this rule was the Bohra Muslim community that traded in silk and other goods. The wealth of Ahmedabad was, therefore, controlled by the Hindus and Jains, especially by the old, established family firms, from the very beginning. These families possessed hereditary monopoly over trading transactions, and were, therefore, in a position to finance the Mughal court. The well established and highly respected Sarafi families acted as bankers, dealt in each other's *hundis* (cheques for payments over distances), changed coins, acted as the paymasters of the army, and as financiers to princes and merchants, provided insurance, served as trustees for religious and charitable purposes and sometimes engaged in commercial activities on their own account (Gillion 1969: 17).

During the eighteenth century the city declined once again with the disintegration of the Mughal Empire. Ahmedabad was ruled jointly by the Muslims and Marathas from 1738 to 1753. In 1757 it came completely under the control of the Maratha Kings. Until 1817, when it was annexed by the East India Company, the city was almost deserted. Under the control of the East India Company the city once again revived, and was transformed into a modern industrial city (Gillion, 1969, p.14-17).

Whereas Muslims exercised power during the period of the Gujarat dynasty and Mughal rule as influential officials of the court, once the city fell into the hands of the Hindu Maratha

[6] With the disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate in 1394, the Governor of Gujarat declared independence from the Delhi Sultans in 1403. Thus was the Gujarat Sultanate, which came to be known as the Ahmadshahi, founded by Ahmad Shah's grandfather.

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kings, the community lost its power. Thereafter, a majority of the Muslims remained, mainly as weavers, while control over trade, commerce, finance and later administration was monopolised by the Hindus and Jains. The only section of the Muslim community that retained its wealth was the Bohra community. Clearly the fortunes of the Hindu and the Muslims waxed and waned according to the religious persuasion of the elite that controlled the city.

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If the structure of manufacture, trade, commerce and labour reflected the unequal balance of power between the three main communities (Hindus, Jains and Muslims) in the post-Mughal period, this unequal balance was spatially reflected in the residential patterns of the city, which have remained to this day. Mahadevia writes that the city is:

> ..segmented in terms of levels of living, quality of housing, and availability of basic services. The process of exclusion starts from the segmented city structure, which was earlier segmented on the basis of class but now on the basis of religion. (Mahadevia 2002: 4851).[7]

But this feature of Ahmedabad is not new; it was a constitutive aspect of the very manner in which the city was structured historically. Within the walled city residential, commercial and religious spaces were closely juxtaposed to each other. However, the residential pattern of the city was characterised by two distinct kinds of housing clusters for the Hindus and Muslims, with the former living in caste-defined clusters known as the *Pols* and the latter in *Mohallas* (Gillion 1969: 25; Doshi 1974: 74). The word *Pol* is derived from the Sanskrit word pratoli, which means entrance to an enclosed area. This entrance or gate was generally known by the name of the community that inhabited the closed area. The *Pols* and *Mohallas* marked the clustering of the city population predominantly on religious lines, but the *Pols* themselves were organized largely on the basis of caste. Until the late nineteenth century, owners of the *Pol* would sell land within the area to people of their own caste. In 1872, there were 356 *Pols* in Ahmedabad, and some of them exist until today (Gillion, 1969, 25).[8] Within the *pols* were situated a quadrangle, a temple, a well and common toilets. To some extent residential property in the *pol* was held in common. The residents of the *pol* maintained the area by collecting funds through fines, sale of house property and gifts (Doshi, 1974, 74).

In 1714, violence between Hindus and Muslims accelerated the move towards separate living. Communal violence was precipitated by the festival of Holi, which, marking the advent of spring, involves people throwing colour on each other. One historian on the basis of records narrates the origins of what is possibly the first communal riot in Ahmedabad:

> At the doors of his [Madan Gopal's] house, Hari Ram was indulging himself in enthusiastically playing Holi with a group of sarafs and companions…pouring colour, smearing gulal in a bacchanalian manner…as is their custom. Perchance, a Muslim happened to pass through that street and fell in with them. Taking hold of him, they showered colour, gulal, and dust, and abuses on him…He, considering

[7] The puras that once formed the seat of Mughal officers, declined after the fall of the Mughal Empire. But the puras founded by the Hindu merchants extended the economic life of the main city into the suburbs. The suburb of Madhavpura, for instance, was founded by the Nagarsheth's family in Maratha times. The Pura was composed of a square surrounded by shops and warehouse, and the family was granted the right to levy dues on the cart men who brought their goods to sell in this secure market place. Similarly because the suburb of Raghunathpura "was in a ruinous state and Vukhutchand Seth has been the means of causing the same Pura to be inhabited," he was granted under the Marathas, the right to collect dues on the carts of grain and the cattle brought to the suburbs (Gillion, 1969, 19).

[8] Today some pols remain such as Mhurat Pol, Mandvi-ni-Pol and Lakha Patel-ni-Pol.

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> the situation, got away by some means and, in that very condition, took some people and went to intimate to his holiness…Muhammed Ali.

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The complaint to Muhammed Ali, who was a sermon giver and who was consequently seized by 'regard for the honour of Islam and the cause of the true faith', bore somewhat expected results. Ali went to the mosque, met people of his own sect, and subsequently Muslims 'arrived in groups and bands from every nook and corner shouting 'faith, faith'' (Haider 2005: 129). A general concourse and assemblage of Muslims took place, and determined that Hindus should be killed and their property destroyed, resulting in riot and lawlessness, murder and plunder. The crowd ransacked and set fire to shops in the cloth market and vandalised the property of the sarafs. It then turned to the house of Madan Gopal and other Hindu households. The fight between the barricaded households and the crowd continued for two days, and was only dampened when the Governor sent troops to quell the confrontation. The Ahmedabad riot of 1714, notes Haider, was the only incident of its kind in the recorded history of the city from 1411 AD to 1761. Though the riot was caused by professional commercial rivalry and was confined to a particular locality (Gillion 1969: 144), and was contained by the Muslim administration in two days, it seems to have intensified not only the trend for separate living, but also the construction of barricades in distinct clusters for purposes of defence. The *Pol* normally had one entrance, and this was barricaded and locked. Therefore, whereas within the walled city the *Pol* and the *Mohalla* bred intense interaction within each community, these spatial forms also served to pre-empt social interaction with the members of the other community, and thus generated distrust.

The Making of a Modern Town

The revival of business and manufacturing activity in the city, the introduction of railways that connected Ahmedabad with markets in the rest of India, the development of ports that allowed textiles to be shipped to Europe, particularly during the time of the American civil war, and the general intensification of trade created favourable conditions for the growth of the textile industry (Yagnik and Sheth 2005: 102). This attracted migrants, and the population of the city swelled with the entry of non-Gujarati speaking migrants from other parts of the country. Though the first cotton mills were established within the walled city, subsequent mills were located in the east beyond the railway line, with this district becoming an industrial area. Here, working people lived in group housing units, or *chawls*, built by the mill owners in villages like Saraspur, Rakhial, and Gomtipur, which subsequently became absorbed by the expansion of Ahmedabad. The *chawl*, which consisted of one-room housing, common toilets and a common playground, was generally under-serviced, and marked by acute deterioration of the environment. In these *chawls*, caste Hindus lived in clusters; and other residential clusters consisted of low-caste Hindus and Muslims. Muslim *chawls* were located close to the *dalit chawls*, and both the communities were excluded from upper-caste houses. The practice of living in *pols*, however, continued, with the *pol* becoming even more exclusionary, with outsiders prevented from entering through the raising of rents, and stringent conditions of sale.

The number of textile mills rose from 60 in 1931 to 81 in 1941, and with the development of various other ancillary industries that gave to boost to trade and commerce, economic activity swelled (Government of India 1962: part E-section 2, p 43). In 1941, the city recorded the highest percentage growth of population (90.43 percent), having almost doubled since 1931, from 310,000 to 591,267. Given the juxtaposition of textile mills, *chawls*, narrow streets and market places in the industrial belt, as well as congestion in the walled city, some of the wealthier inhabitants began to migrate across the river to the western part of the city. By the

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late 1960s, three Ahmedabads had been established: the first, the old walled city in which the upper castes, *dalits* and Muslims lived cheek by jowl but in their own *Pols*; the second, the industrial townships growing around the textile mills in the eastern periphery of the old city, mainly inhabited by *dalit* and Muslim textile workers who together formed two-thirds of the working population; and the third, separated from the earlier areas, which grew across the river Sabarmati. After the decline of the mills in the early 1980s and the rise of power looms, chemical factories, diamond polishing units and other small scale industries, the city extended southwards attracting immigrants from Saurashtra, Hindi-speaking areas of northern India and from areas as far south as the river Godavari.

As the city extended, practices of residential segregation in the *Pol* and in segregated *chawl*s were reproduced in new forms. In the newly developed part, which was largely formed by out-migration from the old city, housing societies bought land, subdivided it and developed residential accommodation for individuals and families. But since housing societies were formed by caste and religious groups, it was relatively easy for them to cater for their own community and exclude people from other communities, and even other castes. In short, the exclusions of housing clusters in the old city were spatially reproduced in the new city, with most housing societies determining who should, or should not, live there. Unlike classical theories of capitalism according to which land becomes a mere commodity in capitalist societies, in Ahmedabad land was closely connected to religious and caste hierarchy. The built form became the spatial signifier of the status, or the lack thereof, of the community that lived in it. Whereas these housing societies provided for both Muslim and Hindu communities, a majority of the Muslims continued to live in the old city, in residential areas that under sustained civic neglect rapidly degenerated into slums (including Dariapur, Kalupur, Gomtipur, Behrampur, Bapu Nagar, Jamalpur, and Shahipur).Our research has shown that it is precisely in these areas that the worst communal riots have taken place (see Annex 1). Narrow streets, congestion and clusters of Muslim families living together have enabled rioters to target closely packed houses – for example by throwing petrol bombs over the walls, and setting fire to one house. By the late 1960s even these Muslim families were forced to leave their homes and places of work, and the major riot of 1969 was to mark the onset of ghettoisation.

This was the time when Juhapura came to be seen as a refuge for the victims of violence. Juhapura is one of the largest settlements of the Muslim community, containing about 300,000 people – about 46 percent of the total Muslim community in the Urban Agglomeration. Juhapura borders the Vejalpur area, which is Hindu-dominated. The inhabitants of Ahmedabad pejoratively type the road between the two areas as the ‘border’, and Juhapura is known as a mini Pakistan. The implications of this stereotyping are clear: for Hindus who belong to the right wing, Muslim-dominated Pakistan is the prime enemy. Originally Juhapura consisted of poor Muslim households, but after 2002 affluent Muslim families have also moved into the area. The expansion of population in the area has, however, not been matched by the provision of services. Juhapura falls outside the boundaries of the AMC and most of the land is agricultural, and lacks infrastructure and services. As it is what is euphemistically termed in India an ‘unauthorised colony’, Juhapura is not entitled to health facilities, power supply, roads, drainage and street lighting. Whatever infrastructure has been created in the area, from micro-credit networks, to roads, schools, shops, eating places and mosques, has been built with private funds given by Muslim philanthropic organisations. The area is not connected to the city by public transport since it is located on the highway. Therefore, its residents have been deprived of employment, along with access to good schools and health facilities.

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Though the ghettoisation process began in 1969, some Hindus and Muslims still continued to live in mixed neighbourhoods. Within these neighbourhoods, the two communities lived in discrete housing clusters separated by a fence or a street. By the 1980s the ghettoisation process intensified, and by the 1990s only a few mixed neighbourhoods remained (Yagnik and Sheth 2005: 230). These were the mixed communities that were systematically targeted in the violence of 2002, the horrific details of which, along with the depth of residential segregation that ensued, I describe elsewhere (Chandhoke, 2009). To summarise here, neither the state government nor most of organised civil society within the city acted to support the victims of the violence in rebuilding their lives.[9] The only assistance the communities had was from Islamic relief organisations who, in filling the gaps left by the inaction of the state and most of civil society extracted their own price, organising the victimised communities in poverty-stricken settlements without clear property rights where dependency on these organisations has been maintained.

Today Ahmedabad has few residential colonies with mixed populations and is divided almost completely into Hindu- and Muslim-inhabited areas. The slide from segmented neighbourhoods to ghettos and the spatial marginalisation of the Muslims is the most powerful symbol of their economic, political and social exclusion from the city life. Consequently, a city that had been characterised by different patterns of residential ordering right from its establishment in 1411 is now reorganised on the principle of 'single community areas' where no intercommunity mixing is possible (Chaudhary 2007). Whereas the Hindus have options to live in various residential areas, Muslims have no such option. Hindus live both in the poverty-stricken and in the affluent areas of the city, while Muslims live in areas that are not only poverty-stricken, but also deprived of basic amenities, often outside the pale of governance, and subjected to rank and vicious stereotyping and abuses by the majority community. In the process, an entire religious minority has been downgraded from citizen to subject.

More seriously the spatial marginalisation of the Muslim community carries serious implications for our understanding of communal harmony. Spatial segregation means that the children of one community have absolutely no interaction with the children of the other community. No mixed schools, no playgrounds in which children of both communities can interact, no extra curricula activities that can form the basis of a future solidarity, and no personal friendships that involve visiting each other's homes and dining will inevitably produce and reproduce alienation from the other community. Further, the spatial divide means that people of different communities are not easily able to access the domain of private transactions – i.e. friendships, associational life, dining with others, inter-marrying or indeed membership of social clubs. This has transformed the realm of "the private", which deeply affects society in two ways. First, it is essential that no one should be barred from a world that allows for emotional support systems, formation of friendships, and participation in the fullness of social transactions of a given society. The second is instrumental. We know that political and economic transactions do not always fall entirely in either the public domain or in the domain of the market. It is precisely the private domain of social transactions that guarantees the acquisition of both social skills, which are indispensable for acquiring and retaining jobs, and influential contacts, which are necessary for the same. Where we spend our time and with whom, who our children go to school with, what neighbourhood we live in, what clubs we belong to, and what sort of persons our children marry, have an inescapable

[9] Elsewhere (Chandhoke, 2009) I give an account of the few civil society organisations, like *Aman Biradri* and *Jan Vikas* that have provided support and whose advocacy and action has ensure that the plight of these victims has not been totally ignored.

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effect on material things like jobs, promotions, and prestigious placements. Thus residential segregation narrows the cultural and the political horizons of communities, closes off options, pre-empts creative mingling of perspectives, and prevents the forging of other sorts of identity. Social interaction with persons who are 'not like us', prepares the ground for coming together in civil society, and appreciation of social and cultural differences contributes to the development of reflective and critical judgment. None of this prevails in civil society in Ahmedabad because social interaction is more or less prevented through separate as well as unequal neighbourhoods.

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In sum, residential segregation in the city of Ahmedabad has been both a cause of, as well as an outcome of, social discrimination. After 1969, when the Muslims were gradually forced into ghettos, not only were these ghettos labelled as 'mini Pakistans', their way of life and their sensibilities were simply rendered invisible. It is infinitely easier to target the lives and the properties of a community when it is removed from the mainstream of social life both spatially and symbolically. Geographical distances may not measure up to much in crowded cities, but when these residential neighbourhoods are both spatially and symbolically isolated the distance between the 'us' and the 'them' becomes much more unbridgeable. Since mixed neighbourhoods were simply not set in place in Ahmedabad – and this may be considered a precondition for solidarity in civil society – the two communities remained threatening to each other.

Participation in Political Movements

A second precondition for the mediation and the modification of primary ethnic identities is shared participation in political struggles. Ahmedabad was active in the freedom struggle against colonialism, led by the Indian National Congress, but the majority of the Muslim community does not seem to have participated in this, or participated only partially. There might have been good reasons for the inability of the political leadership of the movement to forge a political coalition against colonialism, but the lack of such shared participation is nevertheless regrettable. Struggle against an identified or an identifiable enemy, whether this enemy is tangible such as the colonial power, or intangible such as corruption and exploitation, forges bonds of solidarity among groups who may be socially and culturally removed from each other. Arguably, inter group solidarity can emerge only in and through political practices, because these practices are constitutive of political identities.

One of the ways in which unity among different communities and castes in India was forged, was in and through the struggle for freedom from British colonialism. The umbrella-like anti-colonial movement brought within its ambit a variety of different groups, each of which articulated its own specific demands, such as the demand for post-independence linguistic states or for social justice. But these demands were made within the overarching demand for independence. It cannot be said that the prime political objectives of forging unity among religious groups was a complete success, because the independence of India in 1947 also brought the partition of the country. The leadership of the Muslim League opted to exit the country and establish a state of its own. But it also cannot be said that the movement was a complete failure for at least two reasons: firstly, more Muslims stayed behind in India than migrated to Pakistan; and secondly, the Indian leadership held fast to its commitment to secularism and minority rights, even though the Constituent Assembly deliberated in the shadow of the mass killings that stamped the partition of the country. This should have reassured the minorities that they would not suffer even if they were in a minority, and sent a

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message to the majority that it could not ride roughshod over the aspirations of minority groups even if it was in a majority.

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In 1902, Ahmedabad hosted the eighteenth session of the Indian National Congress (Government of India 1962: Vol 1, Part E, p 29); and with Gandhi settling there in 1915 the city rapidly became the epicentre of the national movement. Erik Ericson (1969, 258) in his study of *Gandhi's Truth* asks why Gandhi chose to establish himself in Ahmedabad - the "Manchester of India", suggesting that it was because Ahmedabad is "a true city. It breathed, if one may say so, the logic of mercantile life, for its industry had grown from native crafts to small enterprises and to a large industry by an uninterrupted process so consistent that it could truly be said to have a corporate identity. This gave it a character both solid and limited, both strong and ingrown, both alive and isolated, by which it has been able to household through the centuries a remarkable energy." Gandhi choose Ahmedabad, wrote Erikson, because he himself spoke Gujarati and in Ahmedabad Gujarati had always been spoken, studied, and cultivated, because the city was an ancient seat of handloom weaving, because it had also become the centre of the most modern weapons of spinning and weaving, and because the weaving tradition was deeply embedded in a system which made guilds, caste, and religion intimately interdependent. Gandhi was "to call for a rapid modernization of awareness and aspirations and yet also acknowledge those aspects of the ancient social structure which alone could provide irreplaceable elements of a traditional identity…Gandhi could do not better than to settle in a modern place that had preserved some ancient structure, so that from there he could travel and study" (Ericson, 1969, 260-61).

Gandhi founded two noted periodicals - *Navjivan* and *Young India* - through which he could mould public opinion on a host of matters. By undertaking a number of related but distinct endeavours, Gandhi sought not only to mobilise massive numbers of people against colonialism, but also to give to them an expanded concept of freedom. This expanded concept of freedom, or *swaraj*, laid forth several tasks before the country: the abolition of discrimination, the transcendence of religious and caste divisions, and inculcation of the virtues of toleration and non-violence. In short, Gandhi tried to draft a blueprint of a society that was based on ethical principles, in which there was no room for religious strife or communal disharmony. As Mehta (2005: 297) wrote:

> [He] extended the political horizon of Ahmedabad and skilfully linked city politics with the aspirations of the rural and the urban masses. He created a band of grass roots workers…who tried to understand the language of the masses. He established rapport with the low caste people, women, harijans, and adivasis…Gandhi in a very real sense, affected the rhythm of history.

The same painstaking and committed efforts went into the forging of Hindu-Muslim solidarity. In the course of a speech, Gandhi introduced Mohammed Ali Jinnah as the president of one of the biggest Islamic associations in the country (Mehta 2005: 297), who had shown an early commitment to Hindu-Muslim unity (Yagnik and Sheth 2005: 206). [10] In the same speech, Gandhi also acclaimed the pragmatic traditions of Ahmedabad, which he felt would enable the coming together of Hindus and Muslims, and of the extremists and moderates (Mehta 2005: 297). In *Hind Swaraj,* which has by now attained the stature of a classic, Gandhi rejected the imperial premise that the two communities were at odds with each other, and that they could never live together in one country. He observed that on the

[10] Muhammed Ali Jinnah, who was initially committed to Hindu-Muslim unity Makrand Mehta, 'Gandhi and Ahmedabad, 1915-20' p 297

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contrary Hindus and Muslims had historically cooperated with each other for a common cause. Sharply positioning himself against organic conceptions of the nation and against majoritarianism, Gandhi strictly warned against dreams of a Hindu-dominated India and argued that all communities who had made India their homeland were fellow countrymen. Addressing the Gurja Sabha of Bombay in 1915, Gandhi reiterated that Hindus and Muslims were the two precious eyes of India. Prominent Muslims of Ahmedabad – such as Nizamuddin Quereshi, Badruddi Tyabji, Abbas Tiayabji and his daughter Rehana Begum, Nurmiya Sheikh and others – were closely associated with the Congress Party and with the struggle (Mehta 2005: 298).

But when it came to the majority of the Muslim community matters were different. The Congress leadership failed to reach out to the Muslims; and because the separatist Muslim League built up a formidable organisation in the city, leaders such as Jinnah, who had subsequently swung over to the notion that Hindus and Muslims constituted two nations, were able to mobilise the city's inhabitants behind their cause, leading to many in the Muslim community staying away from Congress and the independence struggle, especially after 1920. Varshney (2002: 224-5) has argued that the most vibrant, disciplined and cadre-based Congress party organisation was established in Ahmedabad in the 1920s and the 1930s. Under the leadership of Gandhi, but more importantly Sardar Patel, the party reached all the way down to the neighbourhood and street levels. He concludes that Muslim participation in the movement was actually quite considerable, enabling the construction of several civic bridges between the Hindu and the Muslim communities. Even if these were not as many as the Congress leadership, committed to Hindu-Muslim unity, would have liked, it did ensure that in case of disturbances, substantial mechanisms for intercommunal communication would be available (Varshney 2002: 226).

Nevertheless, the evidence shows that widespread participation by the Muslims in the apex struggles of the 1920s, 30s and 40s was not a constitutive feature of the national movement in Ahmedabad. After Jinnah resigned from the Congress in 1921, partly prompted by disagreements with Ghandi's use of religion for political mobilisation (Hardiman 2006: 163), in general the Muslim community seems to have decided to stay away from the movement.[11] For instance, the citizens of Ahmedabad were at the forefront of the non-cooperation movement for the boycott of government titles, foreign goods, government-controlled schools and colleges, law courts and the legislature. The non-cooperation movement overlapped with the census operations in the city, which were boycotted by the Hindus and the Jains but not by the Muslims.[12] The census report stated that '[a]s a general proposition it may be safely stated that the Muhammadans nowhere joined the boycott, in fact throughout the Presidency, the leaders rendered freely any assistance that was asked of them'. The report reiterated that 'the boycott movement was confined to the Hindu and Jain elements in the city. So far as the Muhammedan community was concerned, it was wholly ineffective' (Dracup and Sorley

[11] In 1920, Gandhi launched the famed non-cooperation movement as a back-to-back movement with the Khilafat movement. The Khilafat movement, which was initiated in 1918 by Maulana Abdul Bari and the Ali brothers, supported the independence of the Ottoman Sultan as the Khalifa of all Muslims, and aimed at ensuring his suzerainty over holy places. The movement was supported by Gandhi, who felt that unity between Hindus and Muslims on this issue would lead to greater unity in general. In the next two years as a powerful anti colonial movement emerged, and Hindu Muslim unity reached its peak. But Gandhi's support for the Khilafat movement also separated him from Jinnah, who felt that religion should not play a role in political mobilization. In 1921, Jinnah resigned from the Congress (Hardiman, 2006, 163).

[12] The 1931 census reported that in 1921 Gandhi had recommended that no hindrance be offered to census operations, because this was a work of great importance.

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1932: 483, 494). In other words, significant sections of the Muslim community did *not* join hands with the Hindus and the Jains in the non-cooperation movement called for by Gandhi.

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The stance of the Muslim community was the outcome of a number of developments. In December 1921, the Congress met in Ahmedabad for its annual session; but differences broke out between Hindu and Muslim participants over the Moplah rebellion, in which Muslim cultivators on the Malabar Coast attacked their Hindu landlords and either killed or converted Hindu families. Moreover, Gandhi had called for a peaceful boycott of the official welcome accorded to the Prince of Wales who arrived on 17 November 1921 in Bombay. That evening a large number of Hindus and Muslims attacked people who had attended the official reception, with the riots continuing for four days. Although Gandhi accepted responsibility for the violence, and went on a three days fast, he admonished Muslims for being the main perpetrators of the violence (Yagnik and Sheth 2005: 208). By mid-1922, the unity between Hindus and Muslims had collapsed, and henceforth the Muslims of Ahmedabad were to play a negligible role in the nationalist movement.

The increasing distance between Muslims and Hindus in the city was also due to the larger colonial design to identify and separate the two communities along the axis of religion. Historians of British colonialism focus on the complex and intangible practices of the colonial state: the politics of enumeration that made groups aware of demographic balances and imbalances; the practices of colonial ethnography that tended to interpret clashes between communities as communal clashes; the practices of colonial officials who sought to administer populations on the basis of categories and stereotypes; and the way in which the colonised internalised these categories and stereotypes (Pandey 1990; Dirks 2001). In other words, the production of a colonial discourse influenced the manner in which the colonised came to think of themselves: as members of a religiously defined group rather than as the sovereign citizens of a modern state. As Yagnik and Sheth (2005: 198) write:

> For common Gujaratis… like their counterparts in the rest of the Indian subcontinent, caste and subcaste, sect and subsect identities were more tangible and real and were the categories they used for social classification rather than 'Hindu' and 'Muhammadan' religious categories imposed by the census [administered by the colonial powers since the 1870s].

Moreover, there were sects such as 'Matiya'or 'Piranapanthi', and such groups as 'Shekhada' and 'Molesalam', in Gujarat that could not be categorised as either Hindu or Muslim. Forty years after the census was introduced, the Bombay Superintendant of the census classified members of such sects and groups as 'Hindu Muhammedans':

> The commissioner of census, E.A. Gait, said that though the persons in this category did not exceed 35,000 it 'has perhaps served a very useful purpose in drawing prominent attention to the extremely indefinite character of the boundary line between different religions in India'. (Yagnik and Sheth 2005: 198)

However, by the twentieth century Gujarat had come to be known as a state where Hindus and Muslims could not get along and could not resolve their differences through any means other than increasingly barbaric violence (Yagnik and Sheth 2005: 192). The politics of enumeration had not only bred divisiveness, but also hostility between the communities.

A great deal has been written on the political consequences of separate electorates in legislative bodies. These consequences were not slight, because competition for community-based seats led to political mobilisation on religious lines, competition among groups, an

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awareness of cultural distinctiveness and ultimately to the demand for the establishment of Pakistan. After local self-government was introduced in 1883-84, half the seats in the municipalities and local boards were elected on a narrow franchise. In the first election to the municipality of Ahmedabad in 1883, nine Hindus and Jains, and three Parsis, were elected. The Muslims, the Patidar and the Vaishnava Vania communities failed to return a single candidate. "Canvassing" writes Gillion (1969: 134-5),"had won the day in Ahmedabad's first experience of modern politics and traditional standing had taken second place." Colonial officers came to the opinion that not all the communities were represented in the local bodies, and that they could not be so represented through elections, given the politics of numbers. The government proceeded to nominate outstanding citizens and representatives of the minority community to the Municipal Commission (Gillion 1969: 35). Not only were different procedures instituted for electing or nominating members to the local bodies, the nominated members specifically represented identity groups. The introduction of separate electorates in the country in 1909 further strengthened the process of politicising identities for the purpose of mobilising votes and acquiring membership of legislative bodies. That such procedures would neutralise the formation of shared political identities through the freedom struggle could have been foretold. The two communities and their respective leaderships were pushed further apart, and the seeds of future bitterness and rivalry were successfully sowed.

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Before the late 1930s the Muslim community had not shown outright hostility to the Congress, but the divisions between the Hindus and Muslims widened when Jinnah reinvented the Muslim League in Gujarat. This was a consequence of regional politics. In the 1937 elections in the Bombay Presidency, the Muslim League won 20 out of 30 reserved for Muslims in the state assembly. Jinnah offered to form a coalition with the Congress ministry that had won 87 seats. But the Congress leader, Sardar Patel, refused this offer, and suggested instead that the League should merge with the Congress. Jinnah rejected this offer, and tensions arose between the two parties, with this filtering through to the Ahmedabad municipality. The members of the League refused to acquiesce in the decisions taken by the Congress, whether these decisions pertained to the renaming of bridges across the Sabarmati, wearing of hand-spun and hand-woven *khadi*, or the celebration of Gandhi's birthday. 'Each action and counteraction reinforced bitterness and hostility between leaders of the two communities', note Yagnik and Sheth (2005: 164).

Matters worsened when as a counter to the Congress mass contact movement in the Bombay Presidency, Jinnah launched his own mass contact movement in mid 1937. Subsequently he established branches of the Muslim League in Gujarat. Soon the Muslims of Gujarat began to view the Congress ministry in Bombay, and Congress-controlled local authorities, with profound suspicion. In February 1938, the Bombay Presidency Muslim Association met in Ahmedabad and passed a number of resolutions expressing complete lack of confidence in the Congress ministry. The Muslim community became aggressive, and between 1938 and 1940 some incidents of communal violence took place in Ahmedabad. In April 1941, some Muslim miscreants launched a massive attack on the Hindu localities of the city. After four days of furious rioting, 76 lay dead and more than 300 were injured, with the casualties being mainly Hindu (Hardiman 2006: 163-4). Inter-communal tensions were summed up in the District Magistrate's report on communal riots in the city (Government of India 1941):

> Since 1937, relations between the two communities have deteriorated rapidly. The Mahomeden community felt that they could not get justice in the time of the Congress ministry. They considered that they must organize themselves strongly to protect their rights .The Muslim League became very powerful in the city and practically all Mohammadens of note, except a few Congressmen became

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> members of it. The Muslim League formed a small but united and clamorous opposition in the Ahmedabad Municipality, nearly all the other members of which were Congressmen. The Municipality instead of confining itself to its proper activities, reflected the atmosphere of the time, and in consequence in the last four years there have been many 'scenes' between the Congress and the League members at Municipal meetings. The local Mahomeddans were also getting more and more irritated with other Hindu organizations. Of recent months, the Pakistan scheme of Mr Jinnah has made a wide breach between the two communities. The local Hindu Mahasabha was particularly bitter against the scheme and constantly exhorted Hindus to adopt more vigorous actions.

Nothing illustrated the gap between the two communities more than the Quit India movement of 1942 against the colonial government, of which Ahmedabad formed the centre. The agitation was remarkable for the strength and duration of protests, and the city was typed as the 'Stalingrad of India'. The core of the support for the movement came from middle-class people belonging to the higher castes, and their localities provided the centres for the agitation. In the city business came to a halt, because the retail, wholesale and share markets were closed in protest against government repression. More effective were the demonstrations and the mass protests, processions, the holding of special days of dissent and continual harassment of the authorities. Notably absent from these demonstrations were the Muslims, who at that time made up twenty percent of the population of the city: evidently they felt little sympathy with the movement. In April 1942, the twelve Muslim members of the municipality were the only ones who refused to support a motion condemning the arrest of the Congress leaders (Hardiman 2006: 163-5).

A shared and widespread participation in political struggles does not appear to be a constitutive feature of the anti-colonial struggle in Ahmedabad. Thus, a process that arguably had the potential to construct solidarity across identities, and which had the capacity to counteract the development of exclusive identity-producing and reproducing schemes, was aborted. The 1941 communal riot, the lack of Muslim participation in the 1942 Quit India movement and the partition of India in 1947 have left a bitter legacy of suspicion and hate between the communities. It is precisely this legacy that is played up by the organisations of the extreme religious right. After independence, the Muslim community has participated in state and national politics, voted for national parties, been elected to the state legislature and the local bodies. Yet the '*Hindutva* brigade' refuses to let the past be forgotten. When Muslim localities are typed as 'mini-Pakistan', or when the road between two residential areas is labelled the border, the intention is clearly to evoke memories of the time when the country was partitioned amidst furious communal killings. What is effectively sidelined in the process of constructing the Muslim community as the 'other' is that an overwhelming majority of the Muslim community chose to stay in India. This choice should have been honoured and the community given all the rights that are constitutionally due to them. But in a post-partition India the religious right refuses to let go of the two-nation theory. Consequently, religious groups, instead of entering into a dialogue with each other, recognising each other, or realising that far more binds them together than divides them, have come to be further polarised. Group identities have hardened as a consequence. The net result is that the second essential precondition for a civil society that can battle undemocratic organisations and movements has not been set in place.

The Politics of the Work Place

A third way in which people subscribing to distinct persuasions can be brought together is through the politics of the work place. Ahmedabad provided a particularly felicitous

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environment for such a possible development, because one of the largest textile industries was established in the city in the second half of the nineteenth century. Compared to other cities in colonial India, the textile industry in Ahmedabad was set up through indigenous endeavours, and funded through indigenous capital investments by small investors and later banks. The first mill that came up in 1858, the Ahmedabad Spinning and Weaving Company, was established by a Nagar Brahmin Ranchodlal Chhotalal who belonged neither to the traditional trading class, nor to the artisan turned traders. Members of the intellectual and professional Nagar community had worked for the courts, and had not been traditionally involved in commerce. As a government official, Ranchodlal was not experienced in business, but he was interested in new technology. Drive, entrepreneurship, and perseverance motivated him to lay the foundations of an industry that generated financial gains for the city; that provided employment to thousands of people form the city and outside; that gave rise to a major working class, and an innovative trade union, and that transformed Ahmedabad into a major industrial city of India. The mills set up by Ranchodlal proved a financial success, and this inspired his friend Bechardas Lashkari to start the second mill in 1867. Increasingly families that were well established in trade and commerce began to invest in the industry, financed by the traditional money lending castes.

By the late-1800s, Ahmedabad had become the centre of the textile industry in India, with the number of mills increasing from 9 in 1891, to 27 in 1900, and 52 by 1910. In 1920, 51 mills were employing 43,515 workers (Gillion 1969: 88). By the time the state of Gujarat was formed in 1960, Ahmedabad housed 24.9 percent of the working factories and employed about 48.2 percent of the labour in the whole state. The textile industry formed the base of the city's economy, and about two-thirds of its industrial production was in the textile and allied industries (Mahadevia 2002: 4852).

The textile industry in the latter decades of the nineteenth century provided economic incentives and opportunities to all people living in the city, and beyond. Yet the city's different communities had unequal access to these benefits. Whereas some Hindu castes were able to take quick advantage of the openings provided in terms of ownership of factories, employment in profitable jobs, involvement in the ancillary sector, distribution and finance, Muslims – with the exception of the Bohra community – generally lost out. During the period of Mughal rule, Muslims had acquired positions in the court as soldiers and as high officials, but only a few Muslims had consolidated a trading or business inheritance. Therefore, as the Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency reported (1913: 25), the largely illiterate Muslim community was simply not in a position to take advantage of proffered opportunities. Gillion (1969: 89) writes that the:

> 'Muslims remained humble weavers or gentlemen pensioners living in pride and semi-poverty. It has often been noted that their failure to take advantage of the opportunities open to them under British rule-for any British discrimination against them was less important here than their own lack of initiative-was of great significance in the modern history of the sub-continent. They trailed behind the Hindus in government service (except the army), in the professions, in commerce, and in industry.'

The establishment of the textile industry could not alter the situation, because like land ownership, the structure of employment and profit was deeply embedded in a hierarchical caste, and an exclusionary religious, social milieu. Only a very few Muslims owned textile mills, while the majority began to work as labourers in the industry

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Within the industry, allocation of tasks was on the basis of caste and religion. The workers in the spinning department were mainly *dalits* belonging to the lower castes. The weaving department consisted, among others, of Muslims, whose traditional occupation had been handloom weaving (Bremen 2004: 16). The division of labour on the basis of caste and religion was reflected in the organisation of the trade union. In January 1918, mill owners – who structured their profits on controlled wages – ruled that since the plague that had struck the city in 1917 was over, the plague bonus (70 percent of the wage) that had been offered as an incentive to workers to stay on in the city would be withdrawn. This decision resulted in tremendous discontent and resistance. The plight of the workers, who were hit hard by rising prices during the First World War, was brought to the attention of Gandhi through a prominent mill owner, Sarabhai, and his sister Anusuya, who had initiated a programme of social reform among the workers. Gandhi decided to intervene and requested Sarabhai to raise the wages of the workers. In February, the workers went on strike because the owners insisted that they would increase wages only by 20 percent and not 50 percent as was the demand. Gandhi appealed to the workers that they should desist from any action that would create bitterness between the two parties: the employers and the employees. The workers should, suggested Gandhi, demand a moderate wage increase, and if this was resisted, settle the issue by arbitration. Gandhi's recommendation set in place the limits of the future union: no violence, no strikes, no bitterness, no enmity, no confrontation, only arbitration and negotiation.

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The matter was referred to a board of arbitration headed by the Collector of Ahmedabad, and Gandhi represented the workers. But this initiative did not succeed and the workers went on strike in mill after mill. A group of owners locked out workers who had demanded a wage hike, and withdrew from arbitration on the plea that Gandhi had no authority to represent the workers. Ultimately the striking workers agreed to Gandhi's suggestion that they accept a 35 percent increase. They pledged that they would not resume work unless their demands were met, but that they would remain law-abiding during the lock out. Gandhi began to organise mass meetings of the workers, and issued leaflets to educate them on the basic principles of *satyagraha*, or righteous struggle through passive resistance (Desai 1983: 39). At the same time he tried to convince the mill owners that a complete victory over the workers would be morally counterproductive, because it would demonstrate nothing but the power of money.

The decision of the mill owners to take back workers who had accepted a 20 percent raise in wages resulted in the intensification of the strike. In March, Gandhi announced his intention of going on a fast until a settlement was reached, or until all the workers left the mills: the first time he undertook a fast in order to influence developments in an industrial setting. Intimidated by the ensuing publicity, and fearing the outpouring of public anger, the mill owners agreed to negotiate, and a solution was reached on 18 March: on the first day they returned to work, the workers would get a 35 percent increase; on the second, a 29 percent raise; and on the third, 27½ percent. This arrangement would stay until the award was announced. In August the arbitrator announced a 35 percent increase.

In Ahmedabad, Gandhi had to come to terms with the same industrial culture that he had previously condemned, and he was compelled to chart out his own policy on industrial relations. He came to the conclusion that the industry should not be harmed by strikes, that capital and labour were interdependent, that the purpose of unions was not to coerce employers but protect workers, and that strikes should take place only when all other attempts at negotiations had failed. This philosophy continued the ethos of Ahmedabad's mills – that of referring to the workers as part of the family – and it is this philosophy that formed the

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bedrock of the Textile Labour Association (TLA) set up in 1920. The name of the union – the *Majoor Mahajan Sangh* – embodied the notion of partnership between the workers and the *Mahajans*, or the pre-industrial guilds through which financiers and merchants had conducted their business. The trade union adopted the principle of compromise rather than of confrontation, and that of arbitration and conciliation rather than of strikes.[13] At the same time the union continued to focus on social reforms, such as literacy and hygiene. The special character of the union was thus grounded in a preference for arbitration and compromise over class struggle, and a culture of social work amongst the poor. Under the influence of the leaders of the Congress Party – Gandhi, Sardar Patel and Gulzarilal Nanda – the TLA became a part of Congress politics. Through the party, the union participated in local self-government bodies right up till 1969 when the Congress Party split. At that point the TLA withdrew, and constructed its own National Labour Organisation.

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The irony is that though workers accepted arbitration instead of confrontation, and partnership with capital instead of class consciousness, they failed to internalise the philosophy of Gandhi: that of non-violence. The spirit of non-violent struggle simply did not capture the imagination of the working class. It also did not seem to capture the spirit of the city that Gandhi had made his home for ten years. The recurrent communal riots tell a story of a lesson of non-violence half learnt or not learnt at all. Thus in 1919, when reports of Gandhiji's detention by the colonial government swept the city, the result was mob violence, and in killings and burning of jails, the telegraph office and the collectors office. But Gandhians such as Vallabhai Patel, Indulal Yagnik, Kaka Kalelkar and Ravishankar Maharaj had walked the streets to counsel patience and reassure the workers (Spodek 1989: 786). But neither the Gandhians nor the trade union leaders intervened in subsequent riots. In the 1969 communal riot, workers clashed in the industrial localities, but the TLA did not mediate. In 1981-82 and 1985-6 waves of riots broke out against the extension of protective discrimination for the lower castes to other backward castes. Though the measures would have helped the workers who belonged to these castes, the TLA again did not intervene to protect its own members (Shah 1970). Leaders of the TLA neither walked the streets to restore sanity, nor did they back their own workers, who belonging to the scheduled castes would have benefited from the reservation policy.

If the trade union leadership failed to raise a collective voice of protest against the communal killings that marred its city, the union also failed to develop a radical working class culture that could enable the workers to access a class identity and thus relate to one another. Though the union secured for its members higher salaries, shorter working hours, non-employment of children below twelve years of age and bonuses, it did not develop a confrontationist attitude to big capital. In 1923, the TLA went on strike because the mill owners had announced a wage cut of 20 percent. The strike did not prove a success, and after two months workers were compelled to return to work after agreeing to a wage cut of 15 percent. Subsequently strikes were more or less abandoned, and it is indicative of the turn that trade union politics took over the years that the only other occasion when the union went on strike was in response to a call given by the rightist Hindu Defence Society in 1985 during the anti-caste turned communal riot.

While charting out a new form of relationship between the workers and the mill owners, the union failed to address a singular problem that besets Indian society: that of casteism and communalism. Just as the different stages of production were dominated by different castes

[13] Workers have never been elected to union leadership, nor have they been present when outsiders according to the proposed rules of arbitration met behind closed doors to deliberate on their complaints (Breman 2004: 44).

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and religious groups, the organisation of the union reiterated these distinctive identities. The TLA was an umbrella organisation, which brought together eight separate craft- and occupation-based unions within the industry, with workers becoming members of the organisation through their own unions. Since their own occupational slot within the textile industry was based on caste and religion, it is as members of a specific identity group that they joined the TLA. Identities were thus reinforced rather than mediated by their class identity as workers.

The net result was the consolidation of caste and religious barriers, which had already been erected in neighbourhoods and in political practices. The consequences of segmented workplace and neighbourhood politics were serious. Since Muslim workers were largely based in departments that had few workers from other groups, these workers set up a separate organisation on the ground claiming that the Gandhian union was under the influence of the mill owners: 'They felt more at home here than in the TLA, with its dominant Hindu style' (Breman 2004: 75). Thereafter the union leadership did not extend its support to Muslim workers. In 1937, mill owners cut the wages of weavers by 25 percent. The TLA, which was associated with the Congress, maintained a silence. The Lal Vavta Mill Kamgar Union established by the Communists assumed leadership, and about 50,000 mainly Muslim workers went on a strike that lasted for three weeks. The Congress government imposed prohibitory orders banning all meetings and processions, and arrested several communist and socialist leaders and workers. When the Congress and the mill owners failed in their tasks, Gulzarilal Nanda – the Majoor Mahajan leader who was in charge of the labour portfolio of the government – brokered a settlement and reduced the wage cut by 7 percent. At that time, Dinkar Mehta – one of the leaders of the striking workers and a pioneer of the Gujarat Communist Party – wrote in his biography:

> Almost all the workers of the weaving sections participated in this strike and a sizeable number among them were Muslim. We realized through experience that although Muslim workers had respect and sympathy for Lal Vatva, their political consciousness had not broken out of the confines of the Muslim League. This ambivalent attitude persisted among Muslim workers for a long time. (Yagnik and Sheth 2005: 218)

After the strike, some of the textile mills discharged a large number of Muslim workers, and neither the ministry nor the *Majoor Mahajan* took steps to reinstate the workers. On the other hand, the Muslim League leadership condemned the action of the mill owners and held the Congress ministry responsible. It is not, therefore, surprising that the Muslim workers turned to the League (Yagnik and Sheth 2005: 219). In 1940, the Pakistan resolution demanding a separate state was adopted by the Muslim League, which had a big presence in the city where it had established a volunteer corps. Members of the Khaksar movement – mainly Muslim artisans and the lower middle class – underwent military training in uniform and they considered themselves the 'Army of Islam'. The movement mobilised the Muslim community effectively and when Muhammed Ali Jinnah visited Ahmedabad in 1940, a 35,000 strong crowd consisting mostly of Muslim assembled to hear him speak.

Clearly the trade union could not bring together the various communities in a shared project that defined the interests of the workers. Nor did the structure of this trade union manage to transform the social context of hierarchy and exclusion in the city, even at the point when the textile industry attracted a major part of the city's workforce. The TLA, concludes Masihi 'remained a conservative union working on Gandhian lines…the whole approach tends to

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strengthen narrow loyalties of the workers at the cost of solidarity of the working class' (cited in Breman 2004: 133):

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> 'Although the Gandhian union pursued a policy of positive discrimination with respect to Harijans (children of God) it displayed a certain reticence towards Muslims. This was fuelled…by a tendency among Muslims themselves…not to join the TLA. As a result, this religious minority was in a vulnerable position, which was expressed in a less active representation of their interests.' (Breman 2004: 133-4)

The final pronouncement on the nature and the consequences of the union was made by the 1929 Royal Commission on Labour, which observed that 'in Ahmedabad the [textile] workers, excluding the Musalman weavers, are organised in a group of craft unions' (Holmstorm 1984: 65). The third precondition for a democratic civil society, work place and union politics, could not be established in Ahmedabad.

The Trigger: The Rise of the *Sangh Parivar*

Thus Ahmedabad provides us with a paramount case of a segmented and divided city, as manifested in separate housing, fragmented politics and segmented work place and trade union activism. The absence of these three background conditions prevented the formation of a civil society with the capacity to battle undemocratic organisations and practices. If people cannot come together in civil society because they have been divided by processes in other spheres of collective existence, then civil society can hardly succeed in keeping watch on the state, as well as on undemocratic groups within civil society itself. However, the fact that different communities in Ahmedabad have reached out to each other only partially still does not explain the periodic bloodletting that has taken place in the city. The translation of prejudice, discrimination and hatred into acts of violence that target populations and seek destruction of property and livelihoods requires a trigger. In Ahmedabad this trigger was provided by the cadres of the religious right. These cadres tapped social and cultural prejudices, excavated bigoted sentiments, made people remember historical wrongs, enunciated an ideology of Hindu supremacy, crafted a strategy to ensure the domination of Hindus, mobilised people, and identified appropriate moments for the inauguration of a riot and the infliction of violence.

Arguably people do not kill each other just because they have not connected in the spaces of civil society. People do not perform ritual acts of violence on the bodies of another just because they perceive the other as unknown and feared. In large parts of India, social groups have been able to live with each other amidst a high degree of intolerance and even social discrimination, without this intolerance and discrimination breaking out in violence. Violence requires agents and purveyors of bloodshed. This agent in Ahmedabad, as in much of Gujarat, was the *Sangh Parivar*. Certainly without a background of segmentation this particular agent could not have found a fertile ground to plant its seeds of hate; but without this agent, different groups might not have engaged in the politics of extermination quite in the way that they have done so. In the late 1960s, Justice Reddy's report on the 1969 riot foregrounded the role of the *Sangh Parivar* in the violence:

> Another noticeable feature to which we must make a reference is the definite part played in various districts which were affected by the workers of the local Jana Sangha and Hindu Mahasabha organisations or by persons having leanings towards them. (Yagnik and Sheth 2005: 252)

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The *Rashtriya Swami Sevak Sangh* (RSS), which is the linchpin of the *Sangh Parivar*, was established in Gujarat in 1941. Ten years later, the party of the *Sangh Parivar*, the Jan Sangh (JS), was also formed. At that time the cadres of the religious right set about mobilising the support of the upper castes for their project: the doctrine of Hindu supremacy. In 1968, the Hindu *Dharam Raksha Samiti*, or the society for the protection of Hinduism, was established in the city. This organisation was a catalyst in causing and extending the 1969 riots. However, the JS and its later avatar, the Bharitya Janata Party (BJP), did not begin to succeed electorally in the state until the 1990s. This is because ever since the banning of the Hindu *Mahasabha* in the 1940s after one of its members had assassinated Gandhi, the *Sangh Parivar* – and especially the RSS – had occupied more or less the margins of Indian politics. Oddly enough it was the students' movement in Bihar and Gujarat in 1974 that brought the RSS and the JS onto the centre stage of Indian politics. The Navnirman movement, which was led by the socialist leader Jaya Prakash Narain, mobilised a large constituency against the corruption of Indira Gandhi's government, and the rise in the price of essential commodities. The movement brought under its fold a number of organisations, including the party's youth wing, the *Jan Sangha Vidyarthi Parishad*, which actively participated in popular agitations. As part of the protest coalition, the JS and the RSS acquired massive legitimacy; and this legitimacy was further enhanced when the RSS cadres were arrested during the internal emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi.

The legitimacy accorded to the cadres of the *Sangh Parivar* during the pre-emergency and emergency days represented one side of the story. The other side is the political opportunity that was provided to these groups to enter the formal arena of politics in Gujarat in the mid-1980s, which had been dominated by the Congress since the formation of the state. The image of the Congress had been badly dented by the imposition of the emergency. In a bid to recover electoral gains, the aspirant Congress Chief Minister, Madhav Singh Solanki, and Jhinabhai Darji tried to project the Congress as a pro-poor, pro-backward caste, and a pro-Muslim party. Towards this end they formulated a strategy termed KHAM. The acronym stood for a coalition of the backward castes, or the *Kshatriyas*, the scheduled castes, or the *Harijans*, the scheduled tribes, or the *Adivasis*, and the Muslims. Together these groups represented almost 56 percent of the population in Gujarat. The formula proved successful, and the Congress won a majority of seats in the 1981 assembly election, and all but one of the 26 seats in the general election. But the strategy sent shivers of apprehension through the collective spine of the upper castes, because clearly their monopoly on power was over. Expectedly these castes migrated in rapid measure to right-wing groups that followed an aggressive line on Hinduism, and who were protective of caste privilege.

Events rapidly overtook this particular turn in state politics. The Congress government tried to benefit the constituents of the KHAM coalition by extending quotas in the system of higher education and in government jobs to the backward caste, and students from the upper castes erupted in angry protests. The *Sangh Parivar* supported this campaign, and its youth wing – the *Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad* – led the agitation against *dalits* and backward castes. The caste war lasted for three months in the city, as well as in the state of Guajarat, and forty people lost their lives. By 1982, the BJP realised that the agitation was harming its potential electoral support, and more significantly was preventing the unity of the Hindus across caste and tribe. Various organisations, with the most prominent being the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* and the *Bajrang Dal*, began to work among the *dalits* and the *adivasis*, providing relief and in general rehabilitating the *parivar*, which had come to be identified with the upper caste and class. By 1983, attempts at forging inter-caste unity had begun to show some results.

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In January 1985, the Chief Minister Solanki increased the reservation quota for socially and economically backward castes and tribes by 18 percent, thereby raising reservations to a total of 49 percent. The *Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad* inaugurated a six-month-long war against the policy. In Ahmedabad, *dalit* localities were attacked, and strikes, shut downs, school closures and curfews brought the city to a halt. On 19 March, a group of Hindus attacked Muslims in the Dariapur area killing three people and injuring eight (Spodek 1989: 761). Violence spread to the western parts of the city, forty-five people were injured and property worth 300,000 million rupees was destroyed. Matters worsened in April, with the violence spreading to the industrial areas. In May, the caste violence slid into communal violence even though the Muslims had no role to play in this confrontation: they were simply not the beneficiaries of the reservation system. But the transformation of a caste into a communal riot was the outcome of a deliberately crafted strategy by the BJP. Intent on forging an inter-caste alliance between the Hindus, the cadres of the Hindu right, particularly the *Bajrang Dal* and the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad*, focussed on presenting the Muslim as the enemy. The tension between castes was thus externalised and projected onto a third party, the Muslims. It has even been argued by some scholars that caste conflicts fostered communalism in the 1980s and 1990s (Shai 2005: 861). Though these cadres had been opposed to reservation policies, in 1985 the BJP reversed its stance and began to favour a reservation policy, and work for the abolition of untouchability.

The electoral fortunes of the party rose, improving dramatically in the period following 1987, with the party winning seats in the Ahmedabad Municipality Elections, the parliament, and the state-assembly elections; and since 1995, the BJP has been in power in Gujarat. A religious group had succeeded not only in its state-making project, but also in taking over state power. The second and third preconditions of a democratic civil society were thus neutralised. Confronted by a state government that was complicit in the violence against the minorities; civil society slid further into inactivity.

Towards a Conclusion: Implications for the Civil Society Argument.

Let us now draw together the various threads of the argument, and work out the larger implications of this case study for the civil society argument. For the foremost question that confronts us in this context is: what accounts for the failure of civil society to raise a collective voice of protest against immoderate deliberate acts of violence, both by state officials and civil society's own organisations in Ahmedabad?[14] I raise this question because civil society in democratic societies (and there is formal democracy in the state of Gujarat) is expected to keep watch on violations of democratic norms by the state, through citizen activism, the making and circulation of informed public opinion, a free media, and a multiplicity of social associations. It is only a vibrant and a watchful civil society that can prevent the political elite from lapsing in its commitments and responsibilities. In 1790, the eminent Irish orator, wit, legal luminary, and Member of the British Parliament, John Curran (1750-1817) had suggested that "the condition on which god hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance." This is the historical mandate of civil society. However, the task of civil

[14] The concept of civil society can be employed in a generic sense or in terms of a definite location. Civil society in the country responded to the one-sided violence that was employed against the Muslims in Ahmedabad with outrage, a number of citizen organisations investigated, documented and circulated abuses of basic fundamental rights, and social activists played a significant role in compelling police stations to record or re-open First Hand Information Reports, brought culprits to the notice of the judiciary, and mobilised opinion through meetings, the media, and the written word. In this work I refer specifically to civil society in the urban space of Ahmedabad. Locating civil society in specific spaces is helpful because boundedness enables us to understand the different ways in which agents realise or do not realise the nature of the civil society project.

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society does not end here. Given the plural nature of the sphere, it is almost certain that some organisations within civil society itself will carry within them the seeds of authoritarianism and a 'will to power'. Democratic organisations in civil society, therefore, have to be Janus faced, with one face turned towards the state, and the other turned inwards towards its own members.

One major implication follows this brief depiction of what civil society in democratic polities ought to look like. We cannot assume that all organisations of civil society will always be democratic. Undemocratic organisations will have to be engaged with, countered, and even neutralised by groups committed to democracy. The realisation of the mandate of civil society, accordingly, demands intentional and determined political action, a fair degree of toleration here, some amount of intolerance there, a readiness to engage with others; and an extraordinary amount of political courage and will to battle both undemocratic states, and undemocratic groups within the sphere. In sum, although we cannot assume that civil society will always be democratic, we presume that organisations are ready to do battle with undemocratic agents. But in the city of Ahmedabad, despite the fact that within a system of formal democracy a number of organisations have taken root in the space of civil society, it almost seems as if these organisations have abdicated their responsibility to battle undemocratic groups in civil society, as well as keep watch on lapses of democracy by the state.

It is in this precise context that we can now proceed to raise a question that has not until now been placed on the agenda of the civil society argument. Though a vigilant and vibrant civil society is considered to be one of the essential preconditions of democracy, it is, perhaps time to ask what the preconditions of civil society are. The major precondition, it seems to me, is that people, who may well subscribe to different persuasions, occupy different niches in the economy and in society, and who may well be unknown to each other, can 'come together' in a series of distinctive and overlapping projects in the space of civil society. This is not to say that people do not 'come together' in a competitive electoral and an equally competitive market system. The logic of civil society, or so it is expected, runs in a direction that is qualitatively different to that of the market and the state. Compared to the power driven state and the profit driven market, the ethos that imbues civil society is that of sociability and solidarity. These properties of social relations are a necessary outcome of participation in shared projects: safeguarding the fundamental rights of citizens, keeping a watch on the state, protecting people against the exploitative market system, or simply encouraging discussion and debate among participants. This, in effect, implies that u*nless people come together across religious, caste, and other ethnic divides, civil society can hardly keep watch on all manners of transgressions by all sorts of agents.* Conversely, if civil society is *not* constituted as a space of sociability and solidarity by associational life, then organisations can prove to be fairly indifferent to the plight of some of their own members.

However, if the practices of the economy, of the polity, and of society reiterate, re-enact, and reify cultural divides in a plural society, how much can civil society organisations contribute to the ironing out of these divisive tendencies? Civil society organisations can build on and consolidate pre-existing webs of solidarity and sociability, but they cannot create these sentiments if they have been systematically destroyed or subverted by other practices. It follows that the ability of people to come together in the shared spaces of civil society itself demands three prerequisites.

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The first prerequisite for a viable civil society requires that, in plural and divided societies, the offshoots of identity producing and reproducing and identity confronting systems should be largely or even partially offset, neutralised, or mediated through various transactions in the work place, through shared engagement in political struggle, and through social interaction in shared neighbourhoods. To reiterate a point that has by now become commonplace; persons are located in a multiplicity of identities. Their primary identity is produced by their cultures, language, religion, or what in generic terms is called ethnicity. This identity is primary because it is the identity we are born into. But being born into an identity by no means implies that this identity cannot be mediated by the politics of the work places, struggles, movements, and neighbourhoods. People are not likely to be locked into one identity, howsoever primary it may be, if they have other identities to draw upon. They do not have to put aside their primary identities or abandon them. All that is required is a willingness to consider, engage, and adopt other forms of identity producing projects, that of the citizen, that of the worker, that of the neighbour, and that of the political activist. But if people do not transact with other people on the basis of shared identities, then not only is the prospect of dialogue in civil society neutralised, the very possibility that civil society can realise its own project is also neutralised.

The second prerequisite is that violence is strictly controlled and monitored by the state or that the state has a monopoly over coercion. A democratically elected state should have acquired control over the means of violence, and it should scrupulously regulate the employment of violence by its own auxiliaries according to the rule of law. The employment of violence, in other words, needs to be justified. Max Weber had famously argued that in modern societies the state acquires a monopoly over violence. 'Today", wrote Weber, "the use of force is regarded as legitimate only in so far as it is either permitted by the state or prescribed by it. Thus the right of a father to discipline his children is recognized as a survival of the former independent authority of the head of a household, which in the right to use force has sometimes extended to a power of life and death over children and slaves. The claim of the modern state to monopolise the use of force is as essential to it as its character of compulsory jurisdiction and of continuous operation."[15] The modern state replaces violence by order and authority. Thereby, the sovereign nation state, which is firmly in control of the production and reproduction of violence, provides the foundation of the international state system. If we were to take this argument to its logical conclusion, at the very time the state comes to gather together and monopolise violence, civil society is constituted as a civil or a non-violent domain. In other words, since the state is in a position to monopolise and monitor all means of violence; in civil society collective practices can be produced and reproduced in non-violent ways.

Therefore, when members of civil society enter the sphere they put aside their swords, six shooters, and other paraphernalia of violence that may have governed social transactions in pre-modern times. Any swordplay or duelling, howsoever dramatically appealing and romantically swashbuckling it may appear to us, is not for this sphere. The only weapons that can be deployed in the discursive spaces of civil society are those of rhetoric, perorations, declamation, and reasoned argument. Or the members of civil society engage in collective action, such as marches, demonstrations, protests, demonstrations, strikes, and other means of *civil* disobedience. Violence, however, is simply not allowed. Even if a surplus of violence spills over from the control of the state into social practices, civil society in and through the politics of engagement should possess the capacity to deal with this phenomenon through

[15] Max Weber, 1998, *Economy and Society,* vol 1, Berkeley, University of California Press, p 56

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discursive practices. For instance, John Keane (1998, 156) argues that though violence is not completely left behind when societies transit from incivility to civility or from pre-modernity to modernity, it is possible to counter such violence by the development of a culture of civility. "I want to emphasize that the cultivation of *public spheres of controversy*, in which the violent exercise of power is resisted initially by civilian-citizens' efforts to monitor it non-violently, is a basic condition for reducing or eliminating incivility…The public spheres of civil society can help to cultivate shared memories of times past when terrible things were done to people."

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The third prerequisite is that in ethnically divided societies, one identity such as religion or language or origin should not become a political project for an ethnic group, which consequently aspires to stamp the body politic with this primary and exclusive identity. If this happens, discrimination against people that do not belong to the right ethnic group becomes a matter of state policy. Simply put, e*thnic identities should not become a constitutive aspect of a state making project.* It is only then that these identities can be mediated, even moderated by other identities that we hold, and by various kinds of transactions that bring different sorts of identity holders, together. And it is only then that the state does not turn against a section of citizens that do not belong to the 'right' ethnic group.

Let me now sum up the broad pattern of the argument. It has been suggested in this paper that civil society as an essential precondition of democracy is valuable because the sorts of transactions people enter into here nourish sociability and breed solidarity. It is only then that civil society can proceed to keep watch on, as well as battle, undemocratic practices of the state and of other organisations. But the realisation of the project of civil society itself demands that people should be able to come together in spheres outside the metaphorical boundaries of civil society. Three of these crucial spheres are residential neighbourhoods, political struggles, and work place politics. This paper has suggested that in the case of Ahmedabad the preconditions for a democratic and vibrant civil society have been weakly articulated and inadequately institutionalised. Therefore, when the religious right arose and provided the trigger for the translation from non-associationalism to violence, civil society was rendered helpless.

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Annex 1

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Year	Causes	Time Scale	Casualties and Damages	Areas Affected	State (In)Capacity
1941	Aftermath of the Pakistan Resolution	18 April to 16 May	93 killed, 316 injure, shops and houses looted, arson, vehicles set on fire, 1374 arrested-589 Hindus and 785 Muslims	Manik Chowk, Astodia, Panch Kuwas, Pankor Naka, Fawara, Khadia Charasta, Gol Linbda, Richey Road, Dhansutar's Pol, Hope Market, Mandwis Pol,kalupur, Jamalpur, Raipur, Gomtipur, Saraspur, Shahpur, Dariyapur	Riots controlled by the government in a month
1969	1) Alleged desecration of Hindu and Muslim holy books. 2) Fall out of the split of the Congress Party	21 September to 28 September	660 people killed, arson and stoning, 34 incidents of stabbing and murder on one day, 6742 houses damaged, 512 persons arrested of which 413 were Muslims. Industrial areas worst hit, loss of $40 million for the Textile industry.	Nadiad, Khulka, Khadia, Nagodiwad, Dariyapur, Jamalpur, Kalupur, Gondal, Chamanpura, Aswara, Gomtipur, Amraiwari.	Army had to be called in. The Jagmohan Reddy Judicial Commission was established to inquire into the riots .It held the RSS and other cadres of the sangh parivar responsible.
1985	Caste-based violence on the issue of reservation for the scheduled and backward castes was transformed into a communal riot between Hindus and Muslims.	March-August Police recorded 743 communal agitations from February to July.	220 persons killed, 100 Muslims murdered and 400 were stabbed, 1200 Muslims rendered homeless. Loss of property amounted to $1,75 billion. 2500 homes of Muslims were damaged and 1500 shops were burnt	Dariyapur, Kalupur, and Bapunagar	Police involved in attacks on the minority community. Professional criminals were involved. Army was called in. The Dave Commission was established to go into the causes of the riot

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1990	Advani began his chariot procession to mobilise people for building the Ram temple where the Babri Masjid stood. The procession took off from the Somnath temple. Whenever the procession passed through Muslim dominated areas the Hindu supporters shouted obscene and provocative slogans. Advani was arrested by the Bihar state government in Samastipur. Passions were inflamed by the strikes and the closures called for by the VHP and the BJP. This led to attacks on Muslims in Ahmedabad.	April	60 persons killed, extensive loss and damage of property belonging mainly to Muslims	Jamnagar, Kangdapeeth, Nawawadah, Sarangpur, Chakla, Kalupur, Dariyapur, Gomtipur, Juhapura, Shahipur, Khanpur, Paldi, Satellite Road, Astodia, Maninagar	State failure to control the riot
1993	Aftermath of the demolition of the Babri mosque on 6 December 1992	January and December	292 persons were killed, and massive loss of property occurred	Daryapur, Wadigram, Naginapol, Charval, Dholka, Khambher, Ankleshwar, Nabipur, Patan, Shahpur, Kalupur, Bapunagar, Kakadbita	State failure to control the riot
1999	Incident of kite flying, animal slaughter, the annual Jaganath temple procession and the fall out of the Kargil conflict between India and Pakistan	January, March, July	19 people killed, 99 injured, 92 incidents of stabbing, 35 arrested. Loss of property, 20 vehicles set on fire, 25 buildings set on fire.	Kalupur, Dariyapur, Shahpur, Gomtipur, Bapunagar, Karang, Saraspur, Khadiya, Panch Paldi, Relief Road, Gandhi Road	State Failure to control riots

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2000	A Bajrang Dal and VHP mob of about 40-50 people attacked a newly constructed building owned by a Muslim, and shouted provocative slogans. Tension occurred during elections	February, May, July, August, September, December	Unaccounted dead, property worth Rs 200,000 destroyed. A Muslim shrine opposite the Amdapur police station was destroyed, and a hundred people were arrested.	Madhepura, Dudheshwar, Kalupur, Dariyapur, Jamalpur, Shahpur	State failure to control riots
2002	Train compartment set on fire one km from Godhra station. In retaliation Hindu mobs began to attack Muslim neighbourhoods	27 February 28 February to 5 March 15 March 26 April to 5 May	58 Hindus killed 700 Muslims killed, and hundreds rendered homeless	Godhra Entire city	State complicity in the violence Police officers and political leaders involved. K.G Shah Commission and later Nanavati Commission set up. Various citizen groups and civil liberty groups investigated the violence

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